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ABSTRACT

Social, economic, and demographic changes that affect the work lives and career patterns of college faculty and possible adaptations to the changing environment by colleges are addressed. In the early twentieth century, the largest American universities were staffed by two distinct types of faculty: those who made a long-term (usually a lifetime) commitment to teaching similar to that of the clergy; and those who entered college teaching from other careers (the professional). With the second type came an an emphasis on practical or clinical work and a connection between college employment conditions and trends in the national labor market. More recently there was been a third type of faculty, the research-minded professors. All three types of faculty emphases (teaching, practice, and research) are important, but the notion that faculty must perform well simultaneously in these disparate areas should be challenged. Rather, tenure and promotion criteria should allow for a variety of roles and for a close match between individual talents and institutional needs. A second step might be to redefine the qualifications for academic positions and to facilitate exchange of qualified professionals between the academic and other labor market sectors. (SW)

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Faculty Careers in the 1980s: A Reassessment

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The main thesis of this paper is that social, economic, and demographic changes in the larger environment in which institutions of higher education operate require some major adaptations in the working lives and career patterns of university faculty. A related point is that those institutions best able to adapt to the changed environment around them will emerge as the strongest in U.S. higher education.

We are all familiar, at least in a general way, with the different patterns of faculty working lives in U.S. higher education from its origins to the early 20th century. Until the mid-nineteenth century, the working lives of college professors, like their social origins, training, and status, differed little from those of the clergy. An academic career meant a long-term (usually a lifetime) commitment to teaching, to a middle-class life style, and to the social and cultural milieu of small towns where most colleges happened to be located, in deference to the Jeffersonian ideal that centers of learning and scholarship would best flourish if sheltered from the corrupting influence of cities and mercantile interests.

A minimum of personal wealth and social standing were necessary to the pursuit of an academic career, not only because it required an earned college degree, but also because the social networks of the traditional college towns brought the professors in close touch with other pillars of the community, businessmen, doctors, lawyers. As was true for the clergy, academic poverty was respected, even admired, so long as it remained within the bounds of decorous gentility. In practice, however, the necessary decorum in housing, clothing, and the education of one's children was often maintained with the assistance of elders or financially successful siblings, for academic salaries were not adequate to support a middle-class lifestyle.

This type of faculty career lasted well into the nineteenth century (and indeed is still characteristic of small liberal arts colleges, especially in the South and Midwest), but a second important model emerged during the Gilded Age, as a result of an astonishing commercial and industrial expansion. Land-grant colleges tied to the development of commercial agriculture and stockbreeding, technical institutes tied to the development of industry, and teacher preparatory schools borrowed their general education curricula from the traditional arts and sciences colleges, yet added courses and programs that required specialized backgrounds and, in most cases, also hands-on professional experience. Frequently, those who taught in such specialized programs moved into the ranks of college faculties after working, for instance, in agricultural research stations and manufacturing, or, in Schools of Education, after holding teaching and administrative posts in the public schools.

This second type of faculty career generally did not require a lifelong commitment to teaching, and it offered both variety and reasonable financial rewards. Thus, it was attractive to men and women from more diverse and unconventional professional and social backgrounds than was the case for careers in the older tradition.

The success of the "professional model" of faculty career introduced two novel features in the academic environment, which have lasted to this day: an emphasis on practical or clinical work, somewhat along the lines of medical education, and a fairly direct connection between conditions of employment in academic institutions and trends in the national labor market. For faculty of the more traditional type, the connection with trends in the national labor market was tenuous. They did not enjoy significant benefits in times of expanding demand for their skills but neither did they suffer catastrophic consequences in times of contraction and crisis. Most faculty trained according to the "clergy model" were teachers of undergraduate students and were basically generalists. Therefore, they could adapt (and indeed were <u>expected</u> to adapt) to ups and downs in enrollment patters and to changes in course content and programs. The more specialized faculty of professional and technical schools, however, lacked incentives to adapt or found it difficult to do so. These professors evaluated their prospects for advancement, their salaries, and generally the quality of their working lives, not according to the economic well-being of their institutions, but according to the standards and values of their fields of expertise, usually in comparison with fellow experts employed outside academe. Their commitment to particular institutions was strongest in times of economic crisis, when non-academic employment opportunities were scarce, and weakest when these were plentiful.

In the early twentieth century, the largest American universities were staffed by these two distinct types of faculty. Their different backgrounds and values caused prolonged tugs-of-war over curriculum, over hiring and tenuring policies, over leadership styles, resource allocation, and almost everything else. The institutional histories of such public multiversities as the University of Illinois, the University of Wisconsin, the University of Texas, and the University of California are particularly rich in examples of such conflict. Until the 1950s, the "clergy model" prevailed among academic leaders, including university presidents. But faculty of the "professional model" fought back very successfully. In the 1930s, they set in motion a vast movement leading to the creation of semiautonomous professional schools within the larger universities. In time, these schools became almost independent of the central leadership of the university. Their curricula were set by professional accrediting agencies and the working conditions

of their faculties were powerfully influenced, if not determined, by the national labor market.

The emergence of the professional schools, with their external frame of reference, intellectual as well as economic, set the stage for the development of a third model of faculty career, the "research model," the one that is most familiar to us and also the one that has come under close and critical scrutiny in recent years.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the recruitment of young, research-minded professors to the academic departments of large universities probably eased the institutional tensions between faculty of the "clergy model" and those of the "professional model." The new recruits had been socialized to a value system that, at least on the face of it, borrowed some elements from both traditions and could bridge the gap. Although committed neither to genteel poverty nor to quasi-monastic dedication to a particular campus, faculty of the "research model" did have a long-term commitment to academic life and to teaching. In this respect they had much in common with colleagues of the "clergy model." However, their professional identities were shaped by mentors, colleagues, and scholarly associations external to the employing institutions. The typical faculty member of this third type was socialized to membership in a discipline-based guild -- the guild of historians or the guild of chemists, for example -- long before he became a professor of history or a professor of chemistry at this university or that. Thus, the new breed of faculty members also had much in common with colleagues of the "professional model."

The recent literature on faculty careers has focused a lot of attention on the "research model," usually with emphasis upon its negative outcomes, such as declining institutional commitment to undergraduate education, excessive specialization, the proliferation of second-rate publications, and the high cost of supporting research-minded faculty. Much less attention has been given to the fact that, at their best, faculty of the "research model" can relate to and bring together colleagues of the other two major historical types.

At my own institution, for instance, tensions between the "clergy model" and the "professional model" were very strong thirty years ago. They still flare up periodically, and when they do, it is usually the research-minded faculty with a commitment to teaching who argue for balance. In the curriculum, they argue for balance between traditional arts and sciences learning and professional training for jobs. In their own working lives, they seek balance between their internal obligations to students and colleagues and their external ties to national and international scholarly associations, funding agencies, research centers, and the like. In the governance of

their institutions, they demand balance between local traditions and externally defined standards of quality and between resources for undergraduate education and graduate training and research.

We know the reasons why the "research model" emerged and took hold in the second half of this century. It met educational and societal needs that could not have been met either by inward-looking liberal arts generalists or by narrowly trained, task-oriented professionals. By the 1970s the pendulum had swung so far in that direction that at the larger universities in the country the "research model" became the only significant avenue of faculty advancement. At hundreds of smaller institutions, including private liberal arts colleges and four-year public colleges, it became, if not the only avenue to academic success, certainly the most obvious and most reliable. Humanists and social scientists who began their careers in the lean 1970s were particularly inclined to stick with the "research model" of graduate school memory because it held the promise of advancement up and out of heavy teaching loads, poor working conditions, and low pay. These faculty members were not inclined to put down roots unless the employing institution could somehow match their definition of appropriate working conditions: few contact hours and advising chores, some graduate seminars and assistants, research and travel grants and, of course, salaries that kept pace with double-digit inflation. In practice, very few colleges and universities were able to deliver these amenities in the 1970s.

In the 1980s, the pendulum is swinging the other way. In striking parallel to what is happening on the national political scene (e.g., verbal and fiscal assaults on Great Society programs), critics of American higher education are decrying the popularity and pervasive influence of the "research model." "Back to basics" slogans have traveled from inner city public schools to college and university campuses. The ideology behind the slogans, which are ostensibly concerned with students and curriculum, have important implications for the working lives of faculty as we approach the 21st century.

Granted that indeed the "research model" of faculty careers is inappropriate to many institutions, and granted also that it has generated unrealistic career expectations among thousands of young Ph.D. holders who will never produce truly significant research, no matter where employed, we should nonetheless take care not to let the pendulum swing back too far.

For faculty careers, the logical corollary of the "back to basics" curriculum movement seems to be a call for a return to the primacy of the "clergy model", whose historical features I discussed earlier. At least this seems to be the thrust of the NIE and AAC reports, with their emphasis on undergraduate teaching and undergraduate involvement in learning. Alternatively, academic leaders are urged to strengthen and emphasize

the relationship between liberal arts and sciences and professional education. Presumably, if more faculty were encouraged to follow some version of the "professional model", and thus to bring more practical experience to the classroom, our educational system would come closer to serving society's needs. Either way, the critics of higher education seem to suggest that if we could just escape the snares of the "research model," with its implicit emphasis on knowledge for knowledge's sake and on loyalty to specialized disciplines, the problems besetting undergraduate education would go away.

Intellectual nostalgia trips are always possible; at times they may be politically expedient and even therapeutic. But they do not solve our problems. Those of our colleagues who would have us return to the "clergy model" ignore two important facts. One is that for the past thirty years graduate schools have not produced college professors (actually, they were never designed to do that); they have produced mathematicians, literary critics, linguists, sociologists, and so forth. Graduate schools can, and maybe should, change their curricula; given the knowledge explosion in most disciplines, however, it is unrealistic to hope that they will produce generalists ready for the undergraduate classroom. Another fact is that in the next twenty or thirty years the greatest need for good undergraduate teaching will be in mathematically based disciplines, that is, disciplines which cannot be taught through the interpretation of sacred texts or of an established canon. Those who will teach those disciplines will not necessarily have to make original contributions, but they <u>will</u> need to keep up with a formidable volume of theoretical and applied research. We can hope that they will be broadly educated men and women; surely we cannot hope that they will be generalists.

The "professional model" seems more relevant and more applicable than the "clergy model" to the future needs of our institutions. Certainly, in the future we will need more faculty with work experience outside the conventional classroom and laboratory. Because professors, like everyone else, live longer and work longer, we may see a greater two-way flow between academic and non-academic employers. But the "professional model", too, has become dated in some ways, not least because rapid changes in basic disciplines and in technology are putting tremendous strains on those who teach such applied fields as engineering, management or the health sciences.

Yet, just at the time when the major historical models of faculty careers seem unsatisfactory and probably on the way to obsolescence, we are clinging to them tenaciously. Some of us, especially through tenure and promotion policies, are coercing our colleagues to choose one of these historical models, for whose merits we make extravagant claims. More frequently, and more absurdly, we coerce our colleagues to live up simultaneously

to the requirements of two historical models or even of all three. Most universities and four-year colleges have faculty codes or handbooks that spell out the conditions for retention and advancement. We are all familiar with these conditions: successful teaching at several levels, significant research (published, of course), and institutional and community service. These professional activities require very different skills and abilities; outside of academe we would not, I think, find them grouped together under the same job description, except possibly at the highest levels of corporate or government leadership. In a way, we condemn our colleagues to prove to themselves and to their peers that they are supermen and superwomen: superb communicators and interactors, original and deep thinkers, skillful writers and editors, organizers, managers, even politicians. Not surprisingly, only a few particularly versatile faculty members measure up to all of these expectations. Most measure up to some expectations some of the time, going through the required motions whether in the classroom, the research library, or the committee meeting.

The point is not to challenge the legitimacy of these traditional areas of faculty activity. They are absolutely essential to the mission of our institutions of higher learning. There can be no learning without effective teaching; there can be no progress in learning without research; and neither of these academic activities can flourish unless the teachers and the scholars themselves take responsibility for quality control and for coordination within the common enterprise, that is, unless they take responsibility for self-governance. What must be challenged is the notion that faculty members must perform well and, to compound the difficulty, must perform <u>simultaneously</u>, in these disparate areas.

In everyday institutional practice we have made some adjustments to reality (having discovered that we are less than supermen and superwomen). Some of us have developed elaborate systems of "weights," designed to give more emphasis to teaching, or to published research, or to institutional service. More frequently, however, we have heralded our unrealistic expectations publicly and uncritically, while privately allowing most of our colleagues to engage in thinly veiled forms of deception. Most of us can recognize the games that institutions and individuals routinely play: repetitive teaching (to avoid time-consuming new preparations); padded publication lists (the same piece of research appears in article form, then becomes a chapter in a book, and finally it may experience reincarnation as an anthology contribution); long lists of spurious service activities (committees whose meetings one has never attended; task forces for which no work has ever been done; community organizations which are irrelevant to one's academic responsibilities).

The junior members of our faculties, who are under pressure to perform well and simultaneously in all areas, usually pay the heaviest price for these not-so-subtle deceptions. Typically, they are not sophisticated or secure enough to know that they can beat the system and get away with it. If they are lucky, supportive chairmen and senior colleagues look out for them, by assigning few course preparations and by getting them appointed to inactive committees. If they are not so lucky, they end up being overworked and chronically anxious about their future. In fact, at a time of relatively scarce job opportunities and of tenure quotas, the working lives of many junior faculty have come to resemble a harrowing rite of passage, one that does not last one day or one season, as in most primitive tribes, but five or six years. I doubt very much that our colleges and universities have gained either in strength or in quality as a result of these barbaric practices!

The negative impact of unrealistic expectations and of attendant deceptions on tenured, senior faculty is less obvious but no less damaging to them and the institutions they serve. Tenure and rank shelter them from destructive anxiety about their jobs (although this can happen where the institutions themselves are in jeopardy). But senior faculty, too, feel pressured to perform in a variety of tasks for which they were never well equipped in the first place or in which they have lost interest. Again, the signs of deception are familiar: the successful teacher who published a few things in order to get tenure and who talks vaguely about articles or books in preparation; the prolific scholar who would rather not have students under foot; the mover and shaker who knows how to organize colleagues, run a meeting, and build networks with off-campus groups but who does not fit any of the historical models of a successful academic career. Senior faculty members with this third set of talents are at a particular disadvantage because, on the one hand, they are dismissed by their peers as "campus politicians" and, on the other, they are viewed with suspicion by those administrators who want fragmented and unorganized, that is docile, faculties.

I believe that a broader, more generous view of the working lives of faculties would free both individuals and institutions from the web of deception, would improve collegial relations on our campuses, and would probably also result in greater faculty productivity. A new model of faculty career might emerge from the broader view.

We might, first of all, stop pretending that most of us can teach several courses, do significant work in the laboratory or library, and have enough energy left over to play significant roles in faculty governance. It would seem more constructive to make room in our tenure and promotion criteria and in our institutional planning for a variety of roles, recognizing the reality that each individual has strengths and weaknesses and

that institutions have many needs. We also need to change our views of faculty careers to reflect the reality of ever longer working lives. As presently structured, the three-rung academic ladder is much too short for working lives that already span forty and more years. Moreover, the traditional professional roles routinely available on campus are too few and, for most people, too confining.

The point of our personnel policies and criteria should be to assure as close a match as possible between individual talents and institutional needs and not, as is now the case, to force every faculty member into essentially the same mold. One way might be to design plans for professional performance and development for each individual member of the faculty, so as to provide differentiated opportunities and avenues to advancement. The plans would be subject to review at specified intervals, to accommodate changing individual and institutional priorities. This approach has already been tried by several colleges, though mostly small, private ones. It is admittedly difficult to implement at unionized institutions, where the concept of individualized career plans inevitably comes into conflict with the concept of collective bargaining.

Individual plans are, of course, time-consuming and difficult to administer. Faculty and administrators who hesitate to experiment with them, however, should try to estimate the current costs -- in the form of human suffering, administrative time, and institutional dollars -- of chronic anxiety among junior faculty and of burnout, despondency, or just plain boredom in the senior ranks. This first step can be implemented within each institution, through the joint effort of local faculty leaders and administrators; individual plans can be tailored rather easily to the mission of a particular institution.

A second step might be to redefine the necessary and sufficient qualifications for academic positions and to facilitate the exchange of qualified professionals between the academic and other sectors of the labor market. The widespread acceptance of the "research model" of academic careers in the past twenty years has had the unintended consequence of separating the academic labor market from other sectors much more sharply than was the case when the "clergy model" or the "professional model" prevailed. This separation has occurred for several reasons, two of which should be mentioned because they may be hampering our ability to think about new models of faculty careers.

First, research-oriented universities seek assurance that the faculty members they employ are indeed capable of doing research and of getting it published, recognized and funded. For entry-level positions, a minimum guarantee is a research degree, the Ph.D. For senior positions, it is a track record of published research, grants and teaching experience. By adopting

these standards, however, research universities, and all other institutions that follow their lead, have restricted the pool of potential faculty members. First, they have excluded, albeit unintentionally, scientists, writers, and other professionals with considerable work experience who may have wished to make a career change to academe, but who lacked terminal degrees or academically acceptable publication. Recently, the restrictive hiring policies have also excluded Ph.D. holders who were trained for academic jobs but are instead working in other sectors, whether by choice or by necessity. Obviously, the loss to academic departments of potential research and teaching talent has been worst in those disciplines that experienced an academic employment crisis in the mid to late 1970s. As the crisis begins to ease, most of the young Ph.D.s who went on to other careers find that they are effectively excluded from academic jobs. Their work experience in government, business, and non-profit associations is not accepted as a legitimate substitute for the conventional academic qualifications. In contrast, members of the same cohort who hung on during the crisis, eking a living out of part-time and temporary teaching jobs, in the end may be rewarded for their persistence.

Persistence is a virtue. But who is to say that those who persisted on the margins of academic institutions were the best and brightest among the Ph.D.s produced in the 1970s? Indeed, it seems very probable that the more skilled and resourceful ones sought and found other challenges and opportunities. Why not alter our restrictive hiring policies and bring members of that so-called "lost generation" of scholars back to academe before they become too comfortably settled in other careers?

With regard to senior positions, the two-way flow of talent between academic and non-academic institutions has long been common in applied fields such as engineering. Recently, however, the two-way flow has also become relatively common in basic scientific fields such as biochemistry, geology, and nuclear or particle physics. The main reason is that most universities cannot afford the costs of high-level faculty research in these fields. It makes sense, therefore, for younger scholars who are ready to work on high-level projects to leave academic departments for research teams at institutes or national laboratories. Conversely, it also makes sense for universities that are developing research and graduate programs in these fields to recruit from those institutes or laboratories a few seasoned researchers to head those programs, and to bring in some of the requisite grants or contracts.

This pattern, already evident in selected scientific fields and in the performing and studio arts, is a healthy one for academic institutions and responds both to educational and societal needs. We can look forward to similar developments in other, more tradition-bound departments, such as English and

history. The teaching of writing, for instance, is being revolutionized by the use of microcomputers and by the pairing of composition classes with classes in a variety of subjects. Traditionally trained literary scholars do not have much expertise to contribute to its success, if indeed they are interested in this enterprise at all. But people with computer science and communications backgrounds and with work experience, for instance, in corporate or military training programs just may be able to help. In history departments, people with experience in archival, analytical, and preservation jobs outside academe are putting new life in aging, highly tenured departments heretofore unable to recover from the crisis of confidence of the mid-1970s.

Finally, a broader, more generous view of the academic profession -- reflected in more flexible hiring policies and freer exchange with other sectors -- may also assist those among our colleagues who feel that they have spent enough years in academe and feel ready to do something else with their working lives. Although the "clergy model" of academic careers is dated and irrelevant to most universities and colleges in the late 20th century, it has left an imprint on our attitudes and values. Especially in the traditional humanistic disciplines, we tend to be suspicious of those colleagues who leave academe voluntarily. We certainly do very little, in words and deeds, to encourage others who are bored, disenchanted, or burnt-out to think of alternatives outside academe. Those of us who are our colleagues' keepers, department chairmen and deans, spend too much time and energy covering up for members of our faculties whose dissatisfaction with their working lives typically shows in humdrum teaching, lack of scholarly productivity, and aloofness from campus life, and not enough time exploring alternatives. Mindful of academic freedom, and respectful of the cherished autonomy of our fellow professionals, we make excuses for them and protect them, whereas other, more authoritarian and hierarchical institutions might censure them and even dismiss them. On one level, we can claim that we are more humane than other professional groups, that our policies are more enlightened. But, on another level, sometimes we use the principle of academic freedom and the institution of tenure as smokescreens for our unwillingness to tackle difficult personal and career situations.

Faculty development activities do help those faculty members who want to find new roles at their home institutions. But what about those who are ready for more radical and permanent changes? They need neither protection nor punishment. Some may need help -- psychological and monetary -- in preparing to leave. All of them need to know that the flow of talent in and out of academe is as legitimate in literature or philosophy as it is in physics, computer science, or applied music. They need to know that to be bored or even burnt-out in one work setting at the age of 40 or 50 does not mean the end of one's ability to produce and contribute in other settings, with different goals,

different demands, different colleagues. Above all, they need to know that if they choose to leave the ivory tower the drawbridge will not go up suddenly and irrevocably behind their shoulders. We must make sure that, while they are still in the tower, looking down from the ramparts to the bridge, they can see a steady traffic of people much like themselves, some leaving the tower, some returning after forays in other parts, some entering for the first time.